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What the Conference at The Hague may be expected to Accomplish.

There are several reasons why important results may be expected from the Conference at The Hague, which will be in session when this number of the *ADVOCATE* is published. The age of the Czar and his position in the political world will cause him to put forth every influence of which he is capable to have the Conference result in as much as possible of what he has proposed. His reputation, both for wisdom and for sincerity, is involved in the outcome; and to a larger extent than many suppose the future internal peace and industrial development of his empire are likewise involved. Russia, therefore, will not only desire and work for the largest results, but she will be ready to make important concessions in order to obtain them.

The seriousness with which for the most part

the governments invited have taken the matter also augurs good results. Almost without exception they have appointed as delegates able men of large experience, many of whom are known to be in thorough sympathy with the purposes for which the Conference has been called. It does not stand to reason that either these men or the governments sending them will be content to have the Conference consume itself in mere idle and wrangling discussions, and end in failure.

Supporting this contention is also to be reckoned the large expression of intelligent public interest in every country which will have delegates at The Hague. This interest has continued unabated since the Rescript was published nine months ago, and in many parts of the civilized world has grown in intensity up to the last moment.

A third and most weighty reason for believing that the Conference will not prove fruitless is the absolute necessity of speedy relief from the vast and growing burdens of European militarism. This is the chief cause of the meeting of the Conference, and it may be expected to work as effectively in bringing good results from the deliberations as it did in calling the Conference into existence. Failure to find means of relief in this direction will be almost equal to the opening of the great war which has been so long talked of. At any rate, failure to make things better will, as John Morley has declared, almost certainly make them much worse.

Those who believe, as we do, that the Spirit of God is in the movement see a still deeper and stronger reason for believing that some really important results will be attained. The mere meeting of the Conference means much, as has been often said. Yes, but the time for mere meetings and discussions has about gone by. The Pan-American Conference met and talked and drew a treaty. But nothing came

of it except its moral influence. The Anglo-American treaty was drawn and discussed—and failed. The time has come for something more, as the ratified treaty between Italy and the Argentine Republic indicates. The Conference at The Hague will do something, and that something will be ratified, in part at least, by the governments. What will it be?

First of all, the Conference will draft some system of arbitration, by which it will be agreed that certain classes of disputes shall be referred to an impartial tribunal, or tribunals, for adjustment. The Czar wishes this. Public sentiment in all the countries represented has expressed itself strongly in favor of this. The delegates of the United States and of Great Britain go instructed to urge such an arrangement. The classes of cases which it will be agreed thus to refer will probably not be very numerous nor of the most serious character. But however limited in scope the agreement may be, this will be the first and supreme thing done by the Conference, and the results of it will be vast and far-reaching in the development of better international relations.

Grave doubts have been expressed from many quarters as to the accomplishment of anything by the Conference in the way of disarmament. There are of course immense difficulties to be overcome. But it seems to us that accompanying any arbitration agreement must be something in the way of disarmament. It will be impossible to secure any agreement to maintain the *status quo*. Insurmountable difficulties will be put in the way of this by some of the nations. It seems equally impossible that any limitation can be placed upon the future development and use of more perfect instruments of destruction. Any such agreement would be evaded, just as that with regard to explosive bullets has been nullified by inventions in other directions. There remains therefore as practicable only some form and measure of disarmament. Without this an arbitration agreement would be of little if any value. We shall expect, therefore, as the Czar has laid the greatest emphasis on this point, that an agreement will be drawn by the Conference by which a small and gradual reduction of armaments both on land and sea will be provided for. The percentage will doubtless be inconsiderable and the dates at which

the reduction will take place not very close together, but something will be tried, simply because the situation is such that there is no other way out of it, except the way of destruction and ruin.

Beyond this two or three other things of minor importance will doubtless be done. The Geneva Red Cross Convention will be extended to maritime warfare. This is already tacitly done in international understanding, as in the case of the United States and Spain in the recent war. This will be a gain to civilization, but indirectly rather than directly. It is questionable whether the Red Cross, however much suffering it alleviates, actually lessens, in the long run, loss of life or even suffering. Governments seem disposed more and more to leave the care of the wounded and sick in time of war to Red Cross and private care, and to concentrate their energies upon the fighting. Thus death and suffering are increased on the one hand almost as much as they are diminished on the other. Nevertheless the Red Cross is of immense value in the development of a larger spirit of mercy, and it thus acts powerfully in an indirect way, in enlarging and strengthening the humanitarian feelings which are the chief force in limiting war, and will be also in its ultimate entire abolition.

The Conference will also doubtless do something in a more general way in the revision of international law as it relates to the rules and customs of war. Just how much, it is not easy to forecast. The United States Commissioners carry instructions to urge that private property at sea be hereafter considered inviolable in time of war. This will almost certainly be agreed to. It has long been urged by the Interparliamentary Peace Union, the International Law Association and by many eminent statesmen and publicists.

But whatever may be done in the way of revision of the rules and customs of war or of extension of the Red Cross Convention, the chief work of the Conference will center in an arbitration Convention of some sort, and in a provision for gradual disarmament. Without one or both these, the Conference on whose outcome, millions of the best people in all lands are waiting with large and confident hopes, will be a practical failure. The reasons which will impel the delegates to come to some agreement for disarmament, and their govern-

ments afterwards to ratify what they do, are so overwhelming that it seems to us they will break down all obstacles. No civilized government or its delegates at The Hague will care to take the fearful responsibility of inviting the disasters which will almost inevitably follow, and follow speedily, if the Conference breaks up and leaves events to go on as at the present time. At least we shall not believe this of any of them, until we are compelled to do so.

Editorial Correspondence.

OPENING OF THE PEACE CONFERENCE.

On the steamer *Paris*, on which I sailed from New York on the 10th ult., I found all sorts of opinion and lack of opinion about the Peace Conference. A lawyer, who talked intelligently, even enthusiastically, about cases and corporations, on hearing that I was going to The Hague to be present during the Conference, asked, with pleasing innocence, "What Conference?" When it was described to him, a look in his face indicated a vague remembrance as if from some far-off ancestral time. I did not smile at him, nor ask him if they had polygamy in Utah, whence he came. A prominent member of the United States legation at one of the principal European courts was sure no good would come of the Conference. It would merely give a decent burial to the Czar's proposition. That was the opinion, he said, in European circles.

A gentle little stewardess, who served in the corridor near my stateroom, hearing us talking of The Hague and the Conference, said she had read everything she could find about it, and she thought it the greatest thing she had ever heard of. A member of a New York and Boston publishing house was greatly interested in the Conference and hoped it would be abundantly successful. So did a learned professor from the University of Zurich, who has watched with great interest the development of the European peace movement.

Notwithstanding the opinions held by the various members of the little world on our "good ship" *Paris*, the Conference at The Hague has met. The delegates, about one hundred of them, have been arriving for several days, and are now nearly all here. The delegations are not all of the same size, some governments having appointed as high as ten or eleven. The members of the delegations have been exchanging visits and preparing for "the battle", as a rather sceptical one of them spoke of the work of the Conference. Most of them are seen in citizen's dress, but the German military delegates and some

of the French have made calls in military dress. The English delegates are housed in the best suite of rooms in the *Hotel des Indes*, the finest hotel in The Hague. Flanking them on one side is Count Münster with his German delegation and on the other the French, the English serving as a kind of buffer between these peaceful enemies. Overlooking and watching them all from the other side of the *Voorhout*, the principal square, is Ambassador White with his American contingent. They are in the *Old Doelen*, a quaint but beautiful antique house with its memories of the early seventeenth century. Following in line with the Stars and Stripes I counted this morning the flags of nine other delegations. The Spanish are, curiously enough, in the same quarters with the Americans, while on the other side of the square the Russians are in alliance with the French, and in striking proximity to the English. Other delegations are some in one place, some in another, in hotels or the houses of legation or private homes.

Everything is crowded, and such a mixing up of nations, twenty-six of them, was never seen before. The city, usually quiet and staid, is thoroughly aroused and everybody seems to have caught the peace spirit. The pedlers, the street-car drivers, and the hurdy-gurdy grinders, all put extra force into their horns, bells and instruments-of-all-strings, as if to say, "Peace! Peace!" One has to make his peace here with every language that is spoken or written, and some new ones that seem to have sprung suddenly into existence out of the mixing of the old ones. I tried an hour ago to communicate with a policeman. I plied him first with English, then with French, then German, to all of which he shook his head. I then threw at him what little Dutch I knew, and he seemed only vaguely to comprehend that.

The "House in the Wood", two miles away, where the Conference is being held and to which I have just made a pilgrimage, has had an army, perhaps I ought to say a peace-band, of painters, and upholsterers and cleaners at work fitting it up for the occasion. The reporters are ringing the changes on the appropriateness of this quiet and secluded palace for holding a peace conference. But of course this is all sentiment, if the gentlemen of the press will pardon me; for any other place would have done just as well, though this is one of the loveliest spots in Europe. The *Orange Hall*, the meeting room of the Conference, is an octagonal chamber with a cupola twenty metres high. It is lighted from above and from the sides. The upholstering of the seats and rows of benches is in dark green baize. There is a table of horse-shoe shape for the president and his bureau, at one side of the hall. A number of side rooms have been set apart for sectional meetings, and a refreshment room, fitted up with thirteen tables—the reporters say that this is an unlucky arrangement.